

# How “HIP” is Your First-Year Seminar? National Research and Trends

**Jennifer R. Keup & Tracy L. Skipper**

Network for Academic Renewal Conference:  
Diversity, Learning & Student Success



March 29, 2014

# Why Examine First-Year Seminars?



**NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER**

FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE® AND STUDENTS IN TRANSITION  
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

# Why Examine First-Year Seminars?

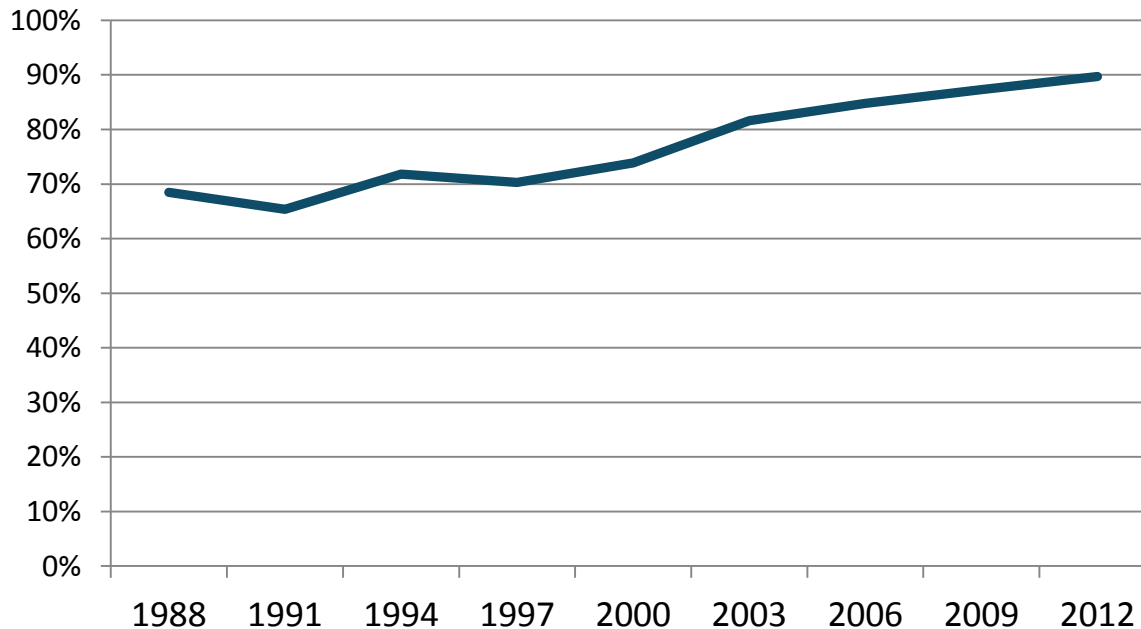


**NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER**

FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE® AND STUDENTS IN TRANSITION  
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

# Why Examine First-Year Seminars?

## Percentage of Institutions Offering a First-Year Seminar



**NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER**  
FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE® AND STUDENTS IN TRANSITION  
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

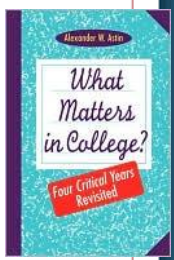
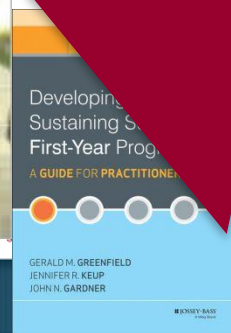
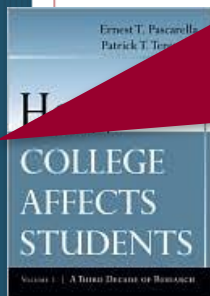
# Why Examine First-Year Seminars?

**“FYS participation has statistically significant and substantial positive effects on a student’s successful transition to college and the likelihood of persistence into the second year as well as on academic performance while in college.”**

*Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005*



The First-Year Experience in American Higher Education





# High-Impact Educational Practices



## First-Year Seminars and Experiences

Many schools now build into the curriculum first-year seminars or other programs that bring small groups of students together with faculty or staff on a regular basis. The highest-quality first-year experiences place a strong emphasis on critical inquiry, frequent writing, information literacy, collaborative learning, and other skills that develop students' intellectual and practical competencies. First-year seminars can also involve students with cutting-edge questions in scholarship and with faculty members' own research.

## Common Intellectual Experiences

The older idea of a "core" curriculum has evolved into a variety of modern forms, such as a set of required common courses or a vertically organized general education program that includes advanced integrative studies and/or required participation in a learning community (see below). These programs often combine broad themes—e.g., technology and society, global interdependence—with a variety of curricular and cocurricular options for students.

## Learning Communities

The key goals for learning communities are to encourage integration of learning across courses and to involve students with "big questions" that matter beyond the classroom. Students take two or more linked courses as a group and work closely with one another and with their professors. Many learning communities explore a common topic and/or common readings through the lenses of different disciplines. Some deliberately link "liberal arts" and "professional courses"; others feature service learning.

## Writing-Intensive Courses

These courses emphasize writing at all levels of instruction and across the curriculum, including final-year projects. Students are encouraged to produce and revise various forms of writing for different audiences in different disciplines. The effectiveness of this repeated practice "across the curriculum" has led to parallel efforts in such areas as quantitative reasoning, oral communication, information literacy, and, on some campuses, ethical inquiry.

## Collaborative Assignments and Projects

Collaborative learning combines two key goals: learning to work and solve problems in the company of others, and sharpening one's own understanding by listening seriously to the insights of others, especially those with different backgrounds and life experiences. Approaches range from study groups within a course, to team-based assignments and writing, to cooperative projects and research.

## Undergraduate Research

Many colleges and universities are now providing research experiences for students in all disciplines. Undergraduate research, however, has been most prominently used in science disciplines. With strong support from the National Science Foundation and the research community, scientists are reshaping their courses to connect key concepts and questions with students' early and active involvement in systematic investigation and research. The goal is to involve students with actively contested questions, empirical observation, cutting-edge technologies, and the sense of excitement that comes from working to answer important questions.

## Diversity/Global Learning

Many colleges and universities now emphasize courses and programs that help students explore cultures, life experiences, and worldviews different from their own. These studies—which may address U.S. diversity, world cultures, or both—often explore "difficult differences" such as racial, ethnic, and gender inequality, or continuing struggles around the globe for human rights, freedom, and power. Frequently, intercultural studies are augmented by experiential learning in the community and/or by study abroad.

## Service Learning, Community-Based Learning

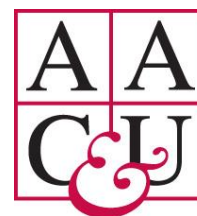
In these programs, field-based "experiential learning" with community partners is an instructional strategy—and often a required part of the course. The idea is to give students direct experience with issues they are studying in the curriculum and with ongoing efforts to analyze and solve problems in the community. A key element in these programs is the opportunity students have to both *apply* what they are learning in real-world settings and *reflect* in a classroom setting on their service experiences. These programs model the idea that giving something back to the community is an important college outcome, and that working with community partners is good preparation for citizenship, work, and life.

## Internships

Internships are another increasingly common form of experiential learning. The idea is to provide students with direct experience in a work setting—usually related to their career interests—and to give them the benefit of supervision and coaching from professionals in the field. If the internship is taken for course credit, students complete a project or paper that is approved by a faculty member.

## Capstone Courses and Projects

Whether they're called "senior capstones" or some other name, these culminating experiences require students nearing the end of their college years to create a project of some sort that integrates and applies what they've learned. The project might be a research paper, a performance, a portfolio of "best work," or an exhibit of artwork. Capstones are offered both in departmental programs and, increasingly, in general education as well.



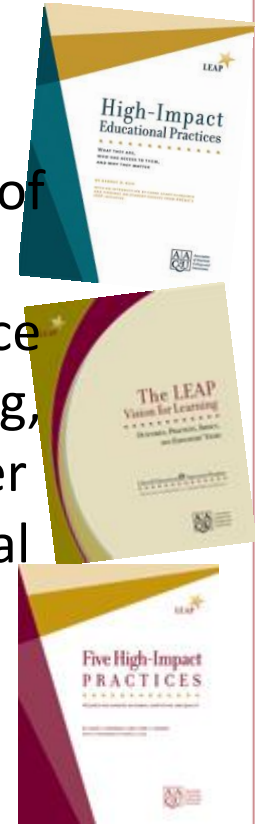
Association  
of American  
Colleges and  
Universities



# FYS as High-Impact Practice

## First-Year Seminars and Experiences

“Many schools now build into the curriculum first-year seminars or other programs that bring small groups of students together with faculty or staff on a regular basis. The highest-quality first-year experiences place a strong emphasis on critical inquiry, frequent writing, information literacy, collaborative learning, and other skills that develop students’ intellectual and practical competencies. First-year seminars can also involve students with cutting-edge questions in scholarship and with faculty members’ own research.”



NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER  
FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE® AND STUDENTS IN TRANSITION  
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

# Why Continue to Examine First-Year Seminars?

“While promising, **they are not a panacea.**  
Only when they are **implemented well**  
and **continually evaluated**...will we  
realize their considerable potential.”

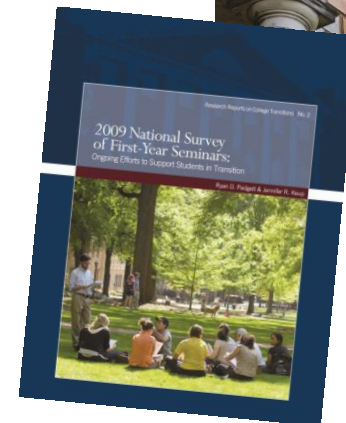


*Kuh in Brownell & Swaner, 2010*





# NATIONAL SURVEY OF FIRST-YEAR SEMINARS



# 2012-2013 National Survey of First-Year Seminars

- Ninth triennial administration of the NSFYS
- Online instrument
  - Types of first-year seminars (FYS)
  - Seminar features
  - Student characteristics
  - Instructional characteristics
  - Administration
  - Assessment
  - Module on HIPs

# 2012-2013 National Survey of First-Year Seminars

- 3,753 **institutions** were invited to participate
  - 4 waves: CAO, CEO, CSAO, 2009 participants
  - Administered from Nov., 2012-Jan., 2013
- 896 campuses responded (23.9% response rate)
- **804** (89.7% of sample) indicated that they had one or more FYS

# Defining First-Year Seminars

A course designed to “assist students in their **academic and social development** and in their **transition to college**. A seminar, by definition, is a **small discussion-based** course in which **students and their instructors** exchange ideas and information. In most cases, there is a **strong emphasis on creating community** in the classroom.”

*Hunter & Linder, 2005*



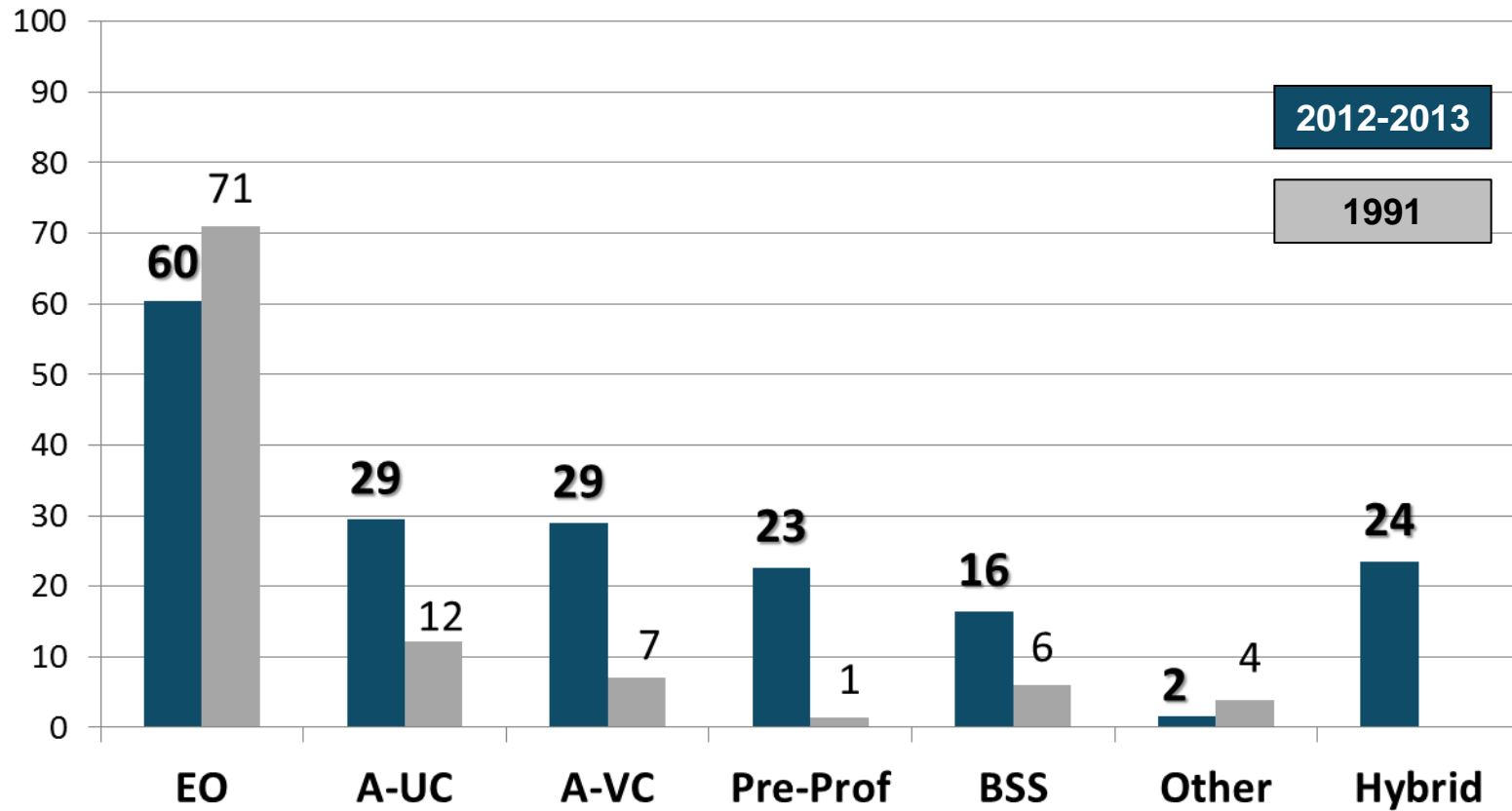
NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER  
FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE® AND STUDENTS IN TRANSITION  
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

# Types of First-Year Seminars

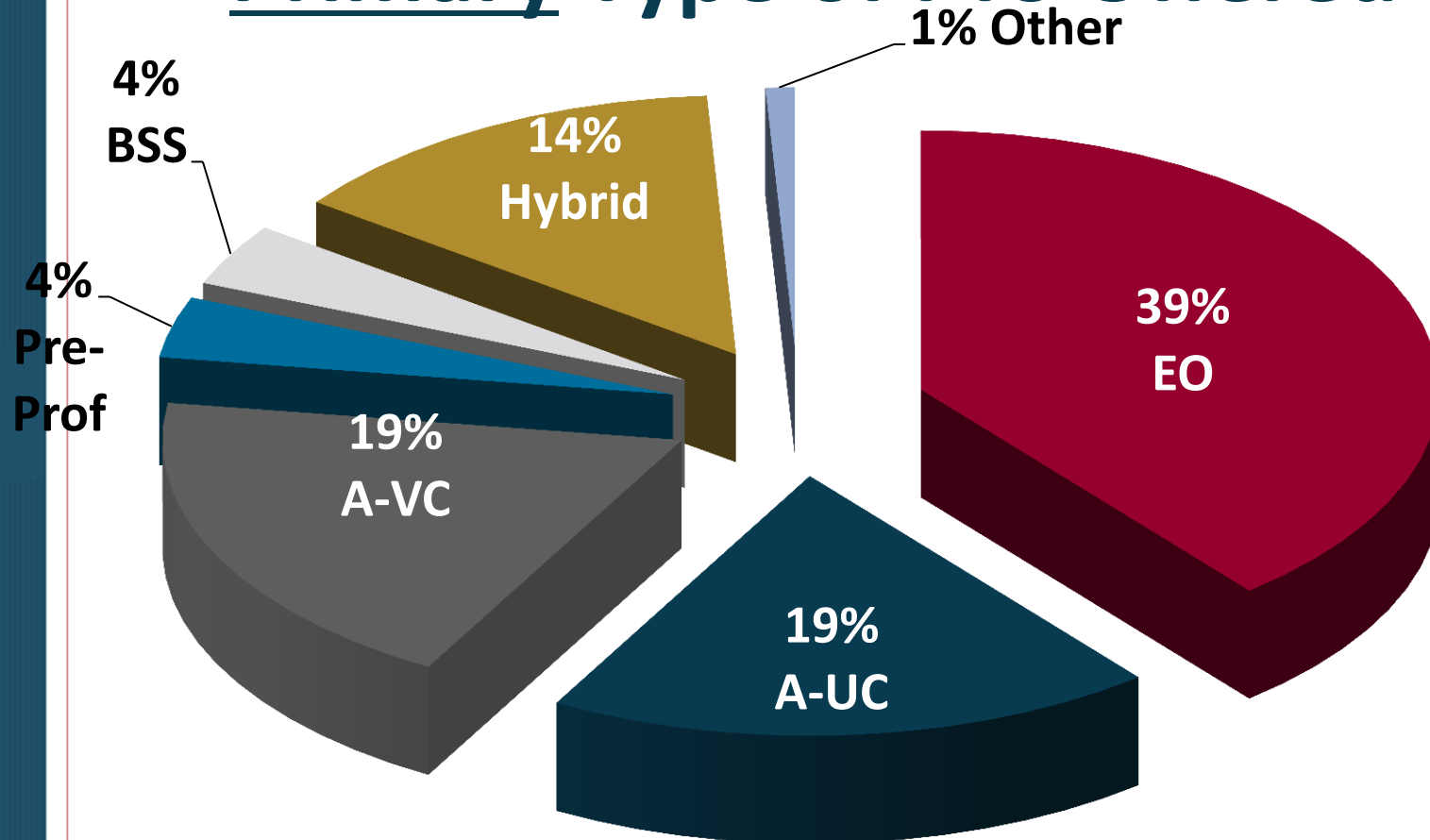
- Extended orientation seminars
- Academic seminars with generally uniform content
- Academic seminars on various topics
- Professional or discipline-based seminars
- Basic study skills seminars
- Hybrid seminars



# All Types of FYS Offered



# Primary Type of FYS Offered



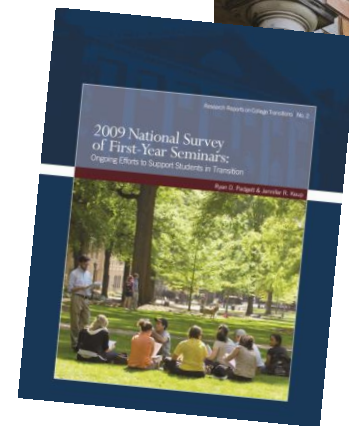
# Most Important Objectives

Objective	Percentage
Develop a connection with the institution	44.9
Provide orientation to campus resources & services	37.8
Develop academic skills	36.3
Develop critical thinking skills	23.3
Create common first-year experience	21.6
Develop study skills	20.0
Self-exploration or personal development	17.0
Develop support network or friendships	14.5
Improve second-year return rates	14.5
Increase student-faculty interaction	12.4
Develop writing skills	11.6

# FIRST-YEAR SEMINAR STRUCTURES



**NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER**  
FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE® AND STUDENTS IN TRANSITION  
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA



# First-Year Seminar Administration

Campus

ntage

Across all campus units administering the experience, 80.2% had a dean, director, or coordinator...[*but*] 56.2% served in the role part time.

*Young & Hopp, 2014*

Student affa

3



NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER  
FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE® AND STUDENTS IN TRANSITION  
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA



# First-Year Seminar Administration

- Average size of a FYS program is 21-30 sections
- 55.6% report a class size of >20 students
- 42.5% require all students to take a FYS
- 43.5% of FYS carry one credit hour
- 85.2% of FYS are letter graded
- Three-quarters of FYS are one term in duration
- FYS credit most often applies toward GE (58.6%), as an elective (37.9%), or the major (8.5%)

# First-Year Seminar Instruction

Instructor	%
Tenure-track faculty	71.1
FT non-tenure-track faculty	60.7
Student affairs professionals	52.0
Adjunct faculty	51.9
Other campus professionals	31.8
Graduate students	4.7
Undergraduate students	4.1

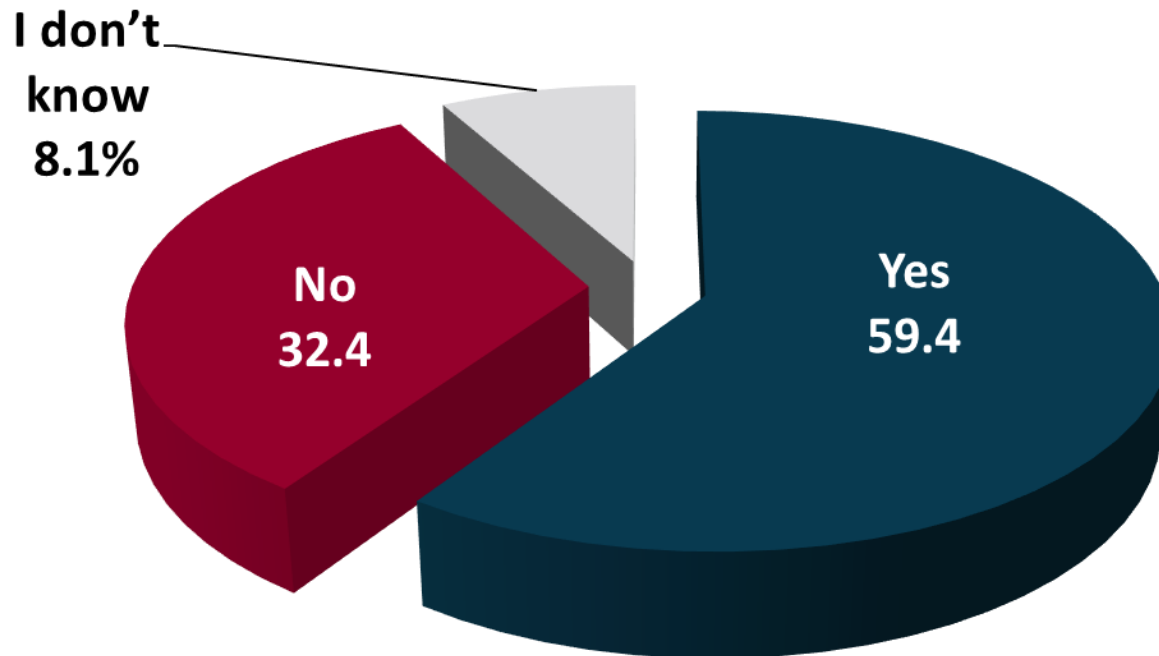
# First-Year Seminar Instruction

Most Important Course Topics	%
Campus	35.7
Critical	22.6
study skills	39.8
Campus engagement	27.7
Time management	22.6

**“The course content in the first-year seminar represented by course objectives and topics are largely aligned.”**

*Young & Hopp, 2014*

# First-Year Seminar Assessment



**NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER**

FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE® AND STUDENTS IN TRANSITION  
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

# First-Year Seminar Assessment

Type of Assessment	%
Student course evaluation	86.9
Analysis of institutional data	71.2
Survey instrument	53.4
Direct assessment of student learning outcomes	52.9
Focus groups with instructors	35.4
Program review	33.3
Focus groups with students	30.6
Individual interviews with instructors	20.0
Individual interviews with students	12.4



# FIRST-YEAR SEMINAR & HIGH-IMPACT PRACTICES



**NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER**  
FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE® AND STUDENTS IN TRANSITION  
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

# High-Impact Educational Practices



## First-Year Seminars and Experiences

Many schools now build into the curriculum first-year seminars or other programs that bring small groups of students together with faculty or staff on a regular basis. The highest-quality first-year experiences place a strong emphasis on critical inquiry, frequent writing, information literacy, collaborative learning, and other skills that develop student intellectual and practical competencies. First-year seminars can also involve students with cutting-edge questions in scholarship and with faculty members' own research.

## Common Intellectual Experiences

The older idea of a "core" curriculum has evolved into a variety of modern forms, such as a set of required common courses or a vertically organized general education program that includes advanced integrative studies and/or required participation in a learning community (see below). These programs often combine broad themes—e.g., technology and society, global interdependence—with a variety of curricular and cocurricular options for students.

## Learning Communities

The key goals for learning communities are to encourage integration of learning across courses and to involve students with "big questions" that matter beyond the classroom. Students take two or more linked courses as a group and work closely with one another and with their professor. Many learning communities explore a common topic and/or common readings through the lenses of different disciplines. Some deliberately link "liberal arts" and "professional course"; others feature service learning.

## Writing-Intensive Courses

These courses emphasize writing at all levels of instruction and across the curriculum, including final-year projects. Students are encouraged to produce and revise various forms of writing for different audiences in different disciplines. The effectiveness of this repeated practice "across the curriculum" has led to parallel efforts in such areas as quantitative reasoning, oral communication, information literacy, and, on some campuses, ethical inquiry.

## Collaborative Assignments and Projects

Collaborative learning combines two key goals: learning to work and solve problems in the company of others, and sharpening one's own understanding by listening seriously to the insights of others, especially those with different backgrounds and life experiences. Approaches range from study groups within a course, to team-based assignments and writing, to cooperative projects and research.

## Undergraduate Research

Many colleges and universities are now providing research experiences for students in all disciplines. Undergraduate research, however, has been most prominently used in science disciplines. With strong support from the National Science Foundation and the research community, scientists are reshaping their courses to connect key concepts and questions with students' early and active involvement in systematic investigation and research. The goal is to involve students with actively contested questions, empirical observation, cutting-edge technologies, and the sense of excitement that comes from working to answer important questions.

## Diversity/Global Learning

Many colleges and universities now emphasize courses and programs that help students explore cultures, life experiences, and worldviews different from their own. These studies—which may address U.S. diversity, world cultures, or both—often explore "difficult differences" such as racial, ethnic, and gender inequality, or continuing struggles around the globe for human rights, freedom, and power. Frequently, intercultural studies are augmented by experiential learning in the community and/or by study abroad.

## Service Learning, Community-Based Learning

In these programs, field-based "experiential learning" with community partners is an instructional strategy—and often a required part of the course. The idea is to give students direct experience with issues they are studying in the curriculum and with ongoing efforts to analyze and solve problems in the community. A key element in these programs is the opportunity students have to both *apply* what they are learning in real-world settings and *reflect* in a classroom setting on their service experiences. These programs model the idea that giving something back to the community is an important college outcome, and that working with community partners is good preparation for citizenship, work, and life.

## Internships

Internships are another increasingly common form of experiential learning. The idea is to provide students with direct experience in a work setting—usually related to their career interests—and to give them the benefit of supervision and coaching from professionals in the field. If the internship is taken for course credit, students complete a project or paper that is approved by a faculty member.

## Capstone Courses and Projects

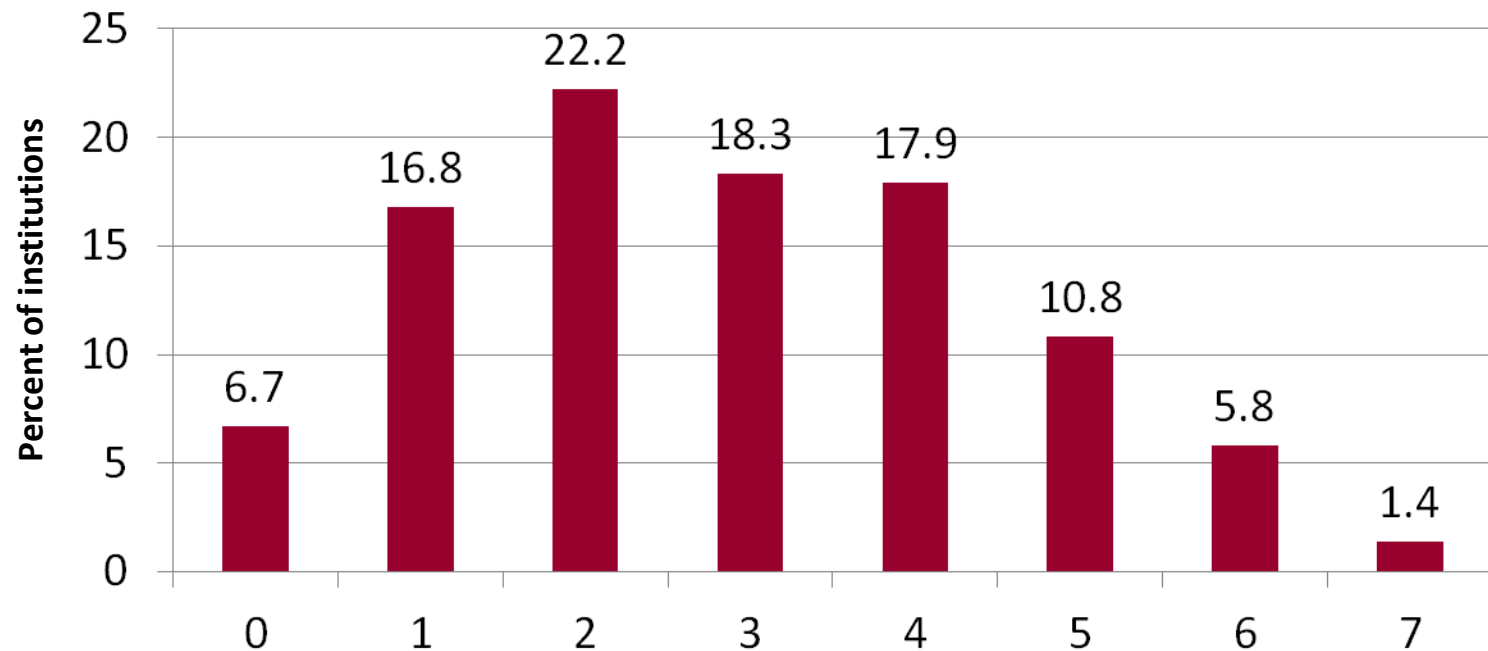
Whether they're called "senior capstones" or some other name, these culminating experiences require students nearing the end of their college years to create a project of some sort that integrates and applies what they've learned. The project might be a research paper, a performance, a portfolio of "best work," or an exhibit of artwork. Capstones are offered both in departmental programs and, increasingly, in general education as well.



Association  
of American  
Colleges and  
Universities



# Number of HIPs Offered in the FYS



**NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER**

FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE® AND STUDENTS IN TRANSITION  
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

# HIPs Examined on 12-13 NSFYS

- Collaborative assignments and projects
- Diversity and global learning
- Writing intensive
- Service-learning
- Learning community
- Common reading experience
- Undergraduate research

# Specific HIPs in the FYS

High-Impact Practice in the FYS	%
Collaborative assignments & projects	67.2
Diversity/Global learning	58.8
Writing-intensive	42.5
Common reading experience	38.1
Learning community	36.8
Service-learning	31.8
Undergraduate research	12.8



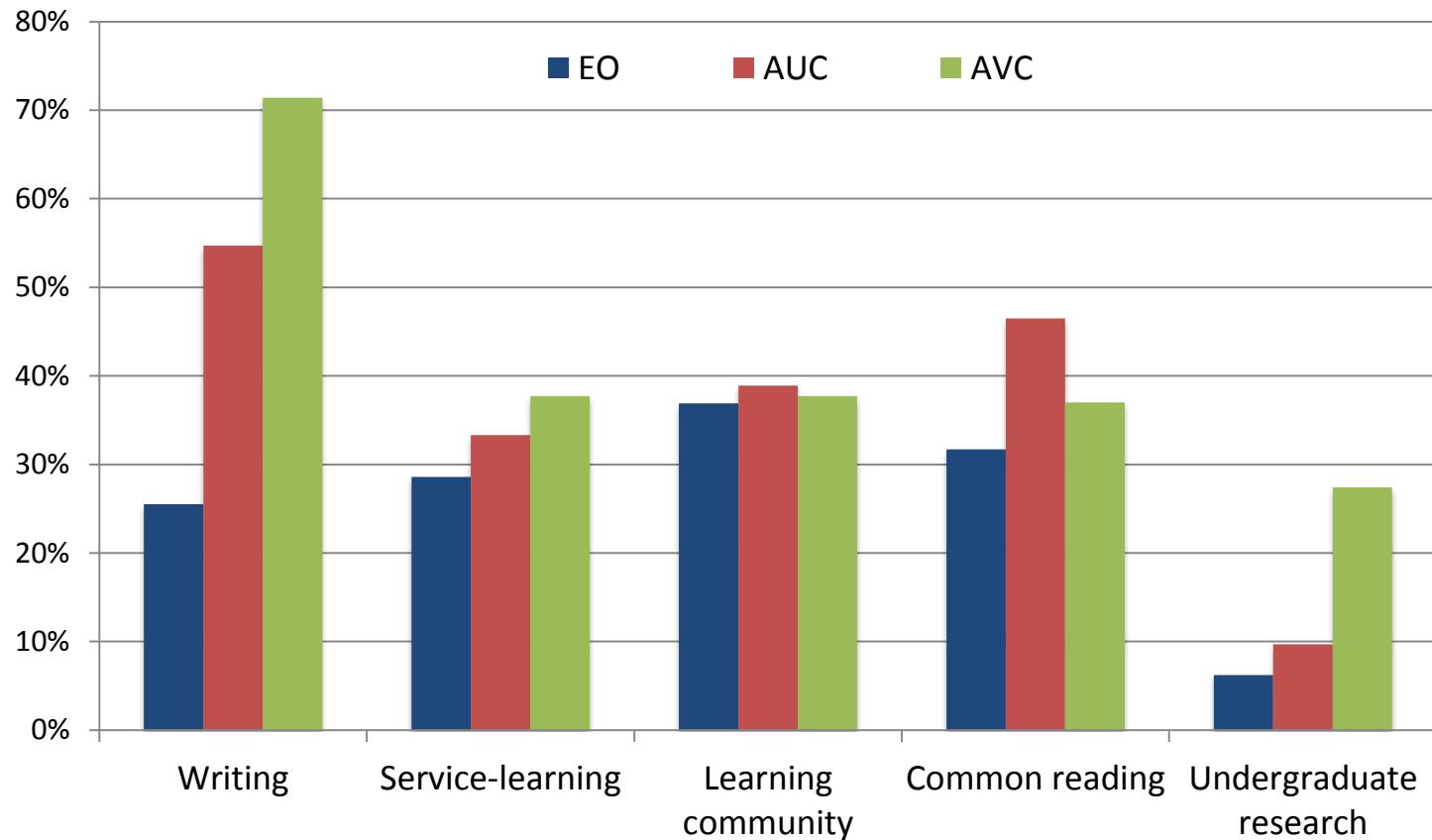
# Specific HIPs in the FYS

High-Impact Practice in the FYS	%
Collaborative assignments & projects	67.2
Diversity/Global learning	58.8
Writing-intensive	42.5
Common reading experience	38.1
Learning community	36.8
Service-learning	31.8
Undergraduate research	12.8



NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER  
FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE® AND STUDENTS IN TRANSITION  
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

# HIPs by Seminar Type

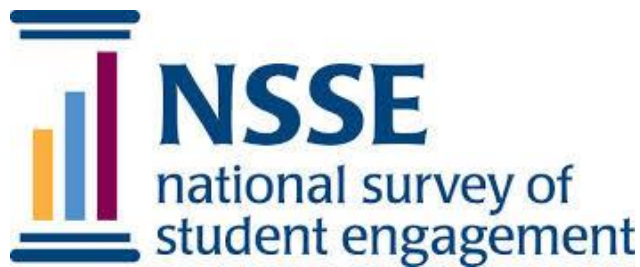


UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

# Writing Practices in the FYS

## NSSE Experiences with Writing Module

- Interactive writing processes
- Meaning-making writing tasks
- Clarity of writing expectations



# Evidence of Interactive Writing Practices

	EO ( <i>n</i> = 75)	AUC ( <i>n</i> = 81)	AVC ( <i>n</i> = 105)	Hybrid ( <i>n</i> = 45)
Instructor feedback	1	2	11	2
Peer review	2	5	13	5
Writing center/writing tutor	1	4	5	3
Collaborative writing assignments	3	2	7	1

# Evidence of Meaning-Making Assignments

	EO ( <i>n</i> = 75)	AUC ( <i>n</i> = 81)	AVC ( <i>n</i> = 105)	Hybrid ( <i>n</i> = 45)
Research paper	4	<b>18</b>	<b>31</b>	11
Expository writing	9	<b>17</b>	<b>11</b>	7
Article review, critique, analysis	4	<b>19</b>	<b>13</b>	11
Argument	0	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>	1
Discipline-specific writing assignments	0	0	0	1

# Other Types of Writing Assignments

	EO (n = 75)	AUC (n = 81)	AVC (n = 105)	Hybrid (n = 45)
Journal	21	18	6	12
Career exploration/academic planning	16	10	1	3
Personal exploration/reflection	22	20	6	13
Electronic writing	5	6	3	2
Response papers	22	14	19	11
Analysis of inventories	4	2	0	0
Career-related documents	3	3	1	0
Business writing	2	1	0	0

# Evidence of Clear Expectations

- 44.3% of institutions that report seminar provides opportunities to produce and revise writing also assess writing as a course outcome
- 88.3% of institutions that identify development of writing skills as important goal also assess writing as a course outcome

# Common Reading in the FYS

Means of incorporating common reading in FYS	%
Basis for class discussion	32.6
Required text or reading	15.8
Orientation or other campus activity	15.4
Varies by instructor/section	15.4
Basis for paper or presentation	10.9
Theme of seminar	4.9
Links FYS with other courses	1.1



# Common Reading in the FYS

Means of incorporating common reading in FYS	%
<b>Basis for class discussion</b>	<b>32.6</b>
Required text or reading	15.8
Orientation or other campus activity	15.4
Varies by instructor/section	15.4
<b>Basis for paper or presentation</b>	<b>10.9</b>
Theme of seminar	4.9
Links FYS with other courses	1.1

# Common Reading in the FYS

Means of incorporating common reading in FYS	%
Basis for class discussion	32.6
<b>Required text or reading</b>	<b>15.8</b>
Orientation or other campus activity	15.4
Varies by instructor/section	15.4
Basis for paper or presentation	10.9
<b>Theme of seminar</b>	<b>4.9</b>
Links FYS with other courses	1.1

# Common Reading in the FYS

Means of incorporating common reading in FYS	%
Basis for class discussion	32.6
Required text or reading	15.8
<b>Orientation or other campus activity</b>	<b>15.4</b>
Varies by instructor/section	15.4
Basis for paper or presentation	10.9
Theme of seminar	4.9
<b>Links FYS with other courses</b>	<b>1.1</b>

# Common Reading in the FYS

- Critical backlash against the Common Reading
  - Student readiness
  - Politics
  - Integration
- Alternate forms of common intellectual experiences
  - Film festivals
  - Scholarly article
  - Service

# Learning Communities & the FYS

- Designed to serve a variety of student populations but most commonly mentioned as major-specific or at-risk student interventions
- FYS linked to a variety of general ed courses but most commonly to first-year composition
- Range from co-enrollment the thematically integrated

# Learning Communities & the FYS

LC Characteristics in FYS	%
Co-enrollment, not all courses	73.8
Coordinated course content	34.5
Common set of theme-based experiences outside of the course	33.5
Living-learning community	30.5
Course content connected by common intellectual theme	25.8
Co-enrollment, all other courses	9.1
Other	8.0

# “What role does the FYS play in the **learning community**?”

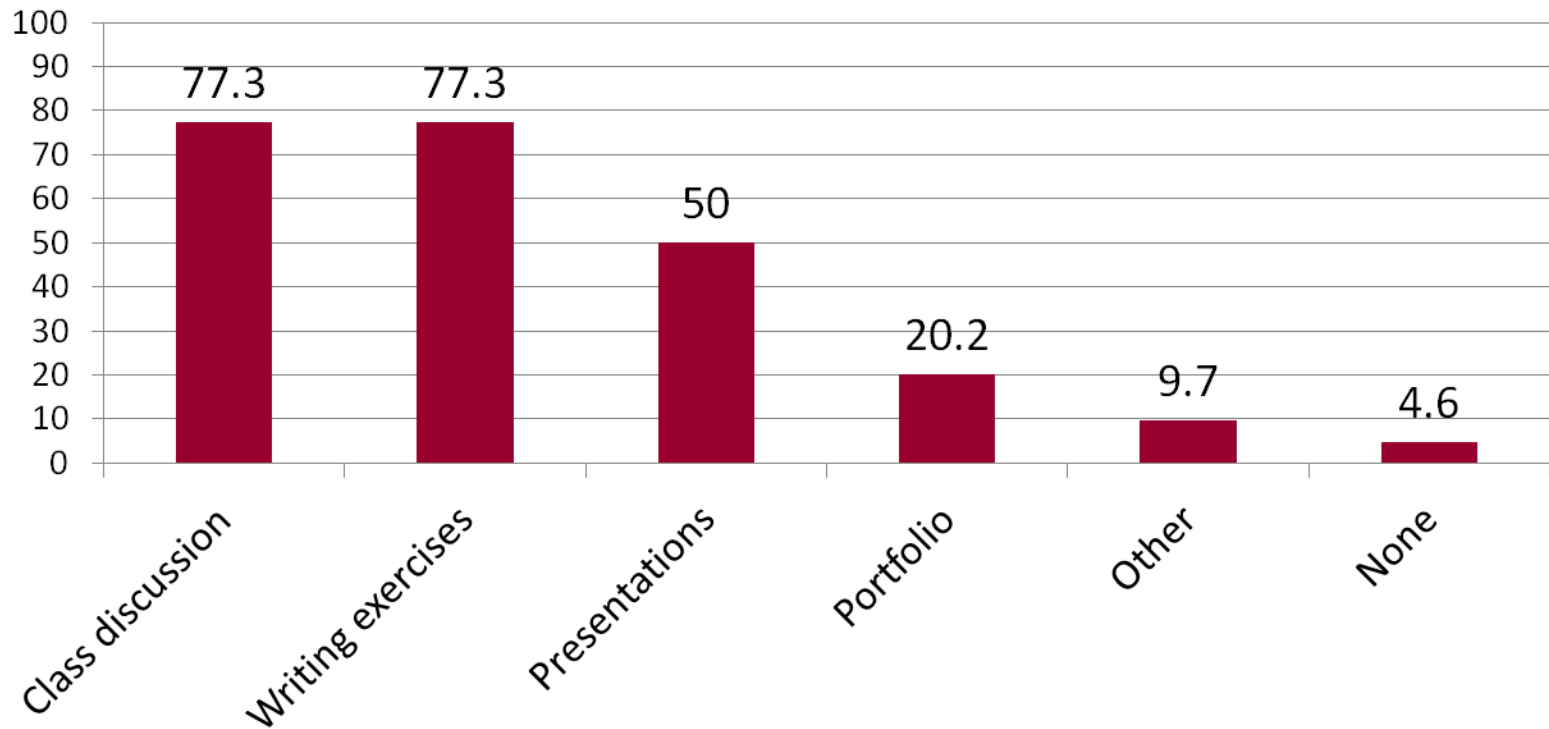
- Linked with common courses (24.6%)
- Contribute to students’ sense of belonging
  - Connecting to peers (17.6%)
  - Connecting to an academic discipline or theme (16.2%)
  - Connecting to the campus and its resources (12.5%)
- FYS was the central feature of the LC (10.3%)
- FYS and LC worked together to support developmental education students (5.1%)

# Service Learning in the FYS

- 42.4% of institutions do not indicate a specific number of service hours
- Service is often of a short duration
  - 26.5% of campuses require > five hours of service
  - 6.3% of campuses require > 10 hours of service
- Hunger/homelessness and at-risk youth are the most common focal points for service



# Reflection Activities for **SL** in FYS



# “Please describe how the FYS incorporates **service learning**”

- Varies by instructor (40.9%)
- Local service in the community (9.8%) or general community service (9.4%)
- Service in connection with the institution (14.0%)
  - Institution-based days of service
  - New student orientation activities
  - Institutionally-organized service project
- Service-based project was an assignment in FYS (13.6%)

# Undergraduate Research in the FYS

Means of incorporating UG research in FYS	%
Introduce research skills	17.7
Varies by instructor	17.7
Research project or paper	14.6
Presentation of research	13.5
Develop information literacy	11.5
Self-directed research	10.4
Discipline focused	8.3
Honors specific	3.1

# Undergraduate Research in the FYS

Means of incorporating UG research in FYS	%
<b>Introduce research skills</b>	<b>17.7</b>
Varies by instructor	17.7
Research project or paper	14.6
Presentation of research	13.5
<b>Develop information literacy</b>	<b>11.5</b>
Self-directed research	10.4
Discipline focused	8.3
Honors specific	3.1

# Undergraduate Research in the FYS

Means of incorporating UG research in FYS	%
Introduce research skills	17.7
Varies by instructor	17.7
<b>Research project or paper</b>	<b>14.6</b>
<b>Presentation of research</b>	<b>13.5</b>
Develop information literacy	11.5
Self-directed research	10.4
Discipline focused	8.3
Honors specific	3.1

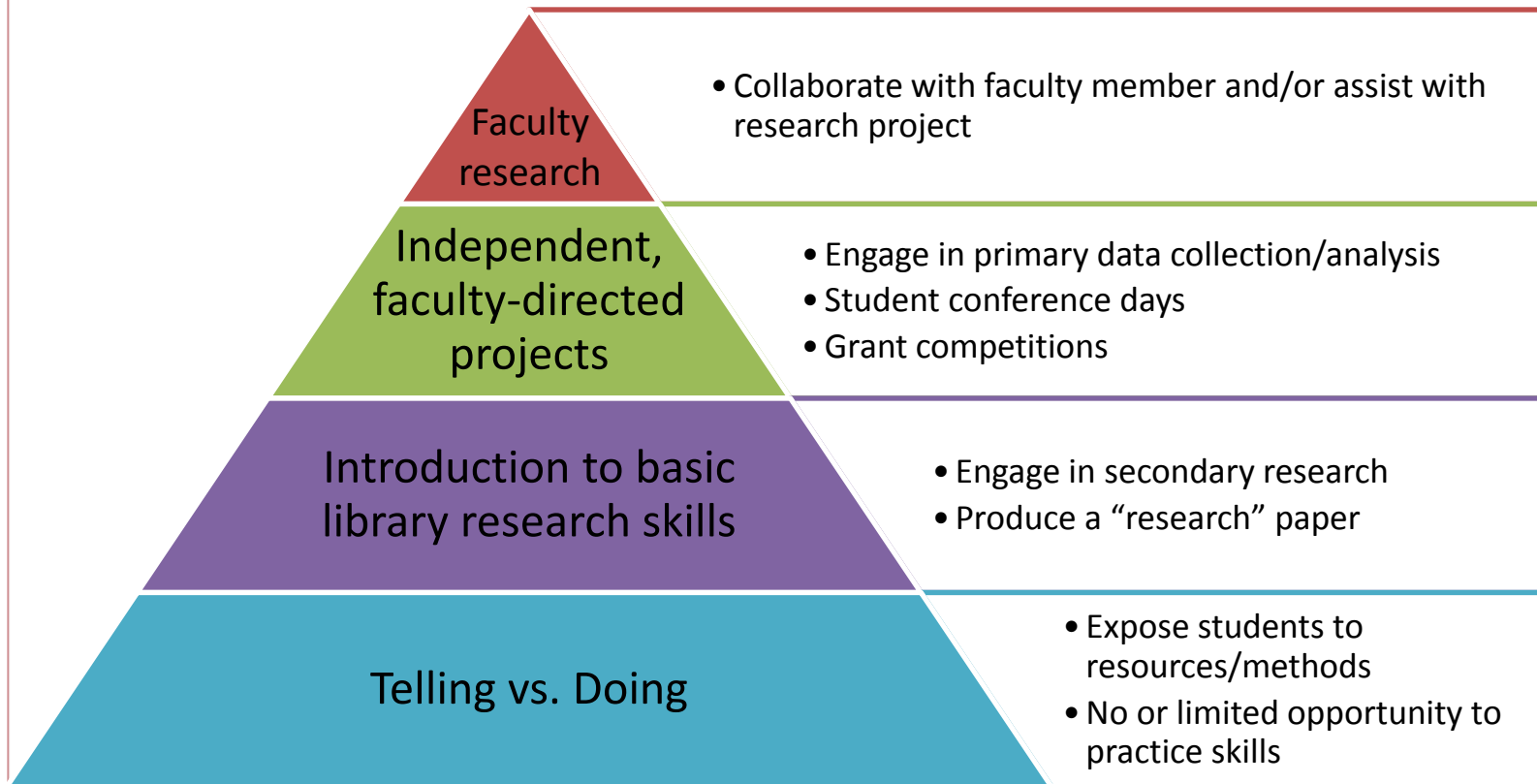
# Undergraduate Research in the FYS

Means of incorporating UG research in FYS	%
Introduce research skills	17.7
Varies by instructor	17.7
Research project or paper	14.6
Presentation of research	13.5
Develop information literacy	11.5
<b>Self-directed research</b>	<b>10.4</b>
Discipline focused	8.3
Honors specific	3.1

# Undergraduate Research in the FYS

Means of incorporating UG research in FYS	%
Introduce research skills	17.7
Varies by instructor	17.7
Research project or paper	14.6
Presentation of research	13.5
Develop information literacy	11.5
Self-directed research	10.4
<b>Discipline focused</b>	<b>8.3</b>
<b>Honors specific</b>	<b>3.1</b>

# Undergraduate Research



**NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER**

FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE® AND STUDENTS IN TRANSITION  
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA



# Parting Thoughts

- FYS serve as a common gateway to high-impact practices and a hub for their delivery
- Positive outcomes are enhanced by exposure to multiple HIPs
- Exceeds the recommendation by Kuh (2008) for undergraduates to participate in 2 HIPs
- Unharnessed potential of HIPs delivery in FYS
- We need to consider intentionality and quality
- Alignment between HIPs and FYS outcomes

# Questions? Comments?

Jennifer R. Keup

[keupj@mailbox.sc.edu](mailto:keupj@mailbox.sc.edu)

Tracy L. Skipper

[tlskippe@mailbox.sc.edu](mailto:tlskippe@mailbox.sc.edu)



**NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER**

FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE® AND STUDENTS IN TRANSITION  
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA